

Mixed Broadleaf Forests (883,498 acres or 0.94% of Montana)



Figure 37. Distribution of Mixed Broadleaf Forest Community Types

Aspen Galleries

Galleries often occur within grassland openings or along the border between grassland openings and coniferous forests. When mature, these galleries often support native tall-grass or mixed-grass prairie plants. When occurring in lowland areas, they are often home to wet meadow species or may contain small wetlands. Sunlight passes easily through the canopy of healthy, mature aspen galleries, promoting understory growth of a rich variety of grasses, wildflowers and sometimes shrubs. In combination, this complex of trees, grasses, and shrubs provide unique foods (including seeds, berries, or nuts) for an equally diverse array of wildlife.

Woody Draws

Draws are a prominent feature across eastern Montana. A much drier, upland environment often surrounds these more diverse dry streambed type areas. Water is not present long enough each year in order to classify them as a wetland, but they are characterized by a greater diversity and density of vegetation that serves a similar function. Woody draws provide essential cover, food, and water for many wildlife species in eastern Montana that otherwise would not exist. Draws are ribbons of life that support some of the highest concentrations of wildlife in the area. Information exists that indicates woody draws are declining throughout the northern Great Plains (Lesica 2005). Conserving these draws will depend on the success of green ash, the dominant plant species in most stands.

Essential Associated Plant Community

Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*)
Birch (*Betula* spp.)
Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)
Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*)
Plains Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*)

There are a total of 26 terrestrial vertebrate species that are found within the mixed broadleaf forest community type, with 5 of these species being essentially associated. All associations can be found in Table 40. Note: Wildlife associations within the mixed broadleaf forest community type were underestimated due to unresolvable issues. This should be considered when interpreting species associations with mixed broadleaf forest in this Strategy. Future revisions should clarify and resolve these wildlife associations with the mixed broadleaf forest community type.

Conservation Concerns & Strategies

Conservation Concerns	Conservation Strategies
All Broadleaf Forests	
Loss of broadleaf forest habitat due to rangeland and forest management practices, clearing for agricultural use, and impacts related to human population growth	Work with agency and private land conservation efforts to place easements on lands and implement resource management for aspen galleries, cottonwood forests and woody draws
	Promote incentives and education for private landowners to protect all three broadleaf forest types
	Work with other agencies, organizations and private land owners to develop best management principals for broadleaf forests
	Work with local governments to support growth and development plans that recognize the importance of broadleaf forests
	Support education efforts to inform the public concerning the critical need for conserving broadleaf forests
	Develop statewide riparian best management principles

Aspen Galleries	
Altered natural fire regime in aspen galleries (increases encroachment of conifers)	Work with other agencies of authority to re-establish natural fire regime to promote aspen gallery health
Woody Draws	
Loss of mature snags in woody draw areas	Promote public education of the need to preserve older snags in woody draws
	Support initiatives to reestablish and maintain green ash in woody draws
Loss of shrub layers and lack of overstory recruitment due to range management practices in woody draws	Work with public and private landowners to provide incentives for sustainable management
	Work to develop best management principals for woody draw habitats

References

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